

## Angels & Shepherds (The 3rd Sunday in Advent)

**A. Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

### B. Message Notes

#### 1. "Living in Wonder Before the Lord"

##### Our Advent Series in Summary

1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday:	PROPHECY	(Waiting)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday:	BETHLEHEM	(Weakness)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday:	ANGELS	(Wonder)
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday:	SHEPHERDS	(Witness)
Christmas:	CHRIST CANDLE	

#### 2. Lingered Questions: Why angels? Why shepherds? Why creation?

- *God creates so that his creation may receive and reflect his love and glory.*

#### 3. Why were angels chosen to give this message?

- *Angel-messengers are fulfilling their designed purpose.*
- *Angels are difficult to ignore.*
- *Angels are examples to us of pure worship.*
- *Angels reflect God's glory, power, and holiness.*
- *Angels introduce us to a place of wonder.*

#### 4. Why were Bethlehem shepherds chosen to receive this message?

- *Shepherds were often misjudged and overlooked in that time.*
- *Shepherds prepared worshippers to understand sacrifice.*
- *Bethlehem shepherds connect us to King David & King Jesus.*
- *Shepherds understand what it means to protect and serve the vulnerable and weak.*
- *Shepherds were courageous stewards of the trust God gave to them, regardless of what others thought of them.*
- *God loves these shepherds and sees their true value as his creation and ambassadors.*
- *Shepherds call us to live in wonder and trust.*

### C. Reflection Questions

1. Why do you create things? What are your expectations for the things you create?
2. Why do you think God created us and all that is around us? How is that reason congruent with what you know about God's nature and character?
3. Read Luke 2:8-14 slowly and ask God to point out a word or phrase upon which he desires that you focus. Circle it and then ask God why this word or phrase was chosen for you. Pray about what God shows you.
4. How are you or are you not living to reflect God's glory? Why is this so?
5. What flock are you called to protect and serve? How may you grow in this service?
6. Express to God your gratefulness for your existence and ask him how you may walk in his purposes for you.

# What are the purposes of angels? (Source: GotQuestions.org)

Naked cherubs, wings, halos, and cute kindergartners in the Christmas play are some of the images that come to mind when we think about angels. But God's Word gives us an entirely different picture. Hebrews 1:7 says, "He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire." Angels are spirits created to serve God's purposes.

Scripture gives us only glimpses into the supernatural realm, but it is enough to learn that angels perform a variety of tasks and are used for several purposes:

**1. To serve the people God saves.** One purpose of angels is to minister to the elect of God: "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). Paul experienced an angelic visitation during a storm at sea. The angel brought him comfort (Acts 27:23–24). Others who have been served by angels include Elijah (1 Kings 19:3–8) and Peter (Acts 12:6–10).

**2. To deliver messages.** The word *angel* literally means "messenger." In the Bible, angels usually appeared as men when they delivered messages from God to people (see Genesis 18:1–3). The angel Gabriel appeared to at least three people in the Bible. He interpreted a vision for Daniel (Daniel 8:16), told Zechariah about the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and proclaimed to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26). Angels in the form of men also warned Lot of God's impending judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1).

**3. To wage spiritual battle.** Another purpose of angels is to fight the forces of spiritual darkness who try to thwart God's plans (Ephesians 6:12; Jude 1:9). When an angel appeared to Daniel to deliver the interpretation of a vision, the angel stated that Michael the archangel had to help him fight his way through enemy forces (Daniel 10:10–14). The full extent of angelic warfare is not known to us, but these few glimpses are enough to suggest that a fierce cosmic battle rages just out of sight.

**4. To worship God.** Angels constantly surround the throne of God, worshiping and shouting His praises (Psalm 148:1–2; Isaiah 6:3, Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8–13). Since angels were created to worship God, their rejection of that purpose is an unforgivable wrong. When Lucifer, a chief angel, refused to worship God and insisted that angels worship him instead, God cast him from heaven (Isaiah 14:12–18). Angels siding with Lucifer were exiled with him.

**5. To serve.** Angels exist to do the will of their Creator. They go where God sends them, say what He gives them to say, and minister to His children on earth (Psalm 103:20; Revelation 22:9; Hebrews 1:14). After Jesus' forty-day temptation in the wilderness, angels came and ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11). When the righteous die, it seems that angels carry them straight to the place of God's rest (Luke 16:22).

**6. To execute judgment.** Angels are not all radiance and joy. They also carry out God's orders for destruction. The book of Revelation foretells many angelic acts that will bring about the ultimate destruction of the world (Revelation 7:1; 8–10). When Pharaoh refused to let the people of God leave Egypt, God sent an angel to strike down every firstborn son (Exodus 12:12, 23). Angels were involved in the death of Herod (Acts 12:23), the slaughter of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35), and the punishment of Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 21:15).

**7. To aid in the transmission of God's Word.** Hebrews 2:2, speaking of the Mosaic Law, calls it "the message spoken through angels." Somehow, angels were involved in the process of Moses receiving the law on Sinai, revealing yet another purpose of angels.

God uses angels any way He chooses. Because we hardly know anything about a world outside our physical universe, we cannot possibly understand all the purposes angels fulfill. But Christians have the confidence that God's holy angels stand ready to protect and deliver God's mortal children (Psalm 91:11). While angels are created beings, as we are, and should never be worshiped, we can thank the Lord for them and the unseen ways He uses them to impact our lives.